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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the background history and sources of the Afghanistan collection at the University Library, University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). Credit for the impetus behind the development of the collection is given to Chris Jung, a former UNO geography/geology faculty member; Ronald Roskens, then UNO chancellor; and the Afghanistan Studies Association (ASA), a group of North American scholars. It is noted that the core Afghan collection was donated to UNO in 1974 by Arthur Paul, a former noted Afghan studies scholar. Also examined are the acquisition and processing of materials, the availability of those materials to users, and the collection's current status in relation to Afghanistan holdings in other North American libraries. Special emphasis is given to a description of the preparation of Pushto and Dari language materials for entry on the OCLC database. A brief discussion of future directions for the Afghan collection concludes the paper. (Author/ESR)

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UNO'S AFGHANISTAN COLLECTION

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores background history and sources of the Afghanistan collection at the University Library, University of Nebraska at Omaha. Also examined are the acquiring and processing of materials, the availability of those materials to users, and the collection's current status. Special emphasis is given to preparation of Pushto and Dari language entries onto the OCLC database. Some future directions are presented.

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HISTORY AND SOURCES:

Until a few years ago, most of us may only have known there is a country called Afghanistan, and, vaguely, its location somewhere in Asia, and some may have known as much about it as James Michener provided in his novel, Caravans, back in 1963. But then a keen awareness of Afghanistan was thrust upon us through newspaper headlines and television newscasts hawking the 16 September 1979 Communist-backed coup putting Hafizullah Amin in power, and, subsequently, reporting the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

To one UNO faculty member and a newly arrived UNO Chancellor, however, Afghanistan had been a subject of study and discussion as early as 1972. Ronald Roskens, (who is now President of the University of Nebraska System), came to UNO with an international perspective on education at the University level, so it was relatively easy to interest him in the idea presented by Geography/Geology faculty member, Chris Jung--to develop at UNO a program to research and study Afghanistan. Before this, through his father's work as project director under U. S. State Department contracts both in Pakistan and at Kabul University in Afghanistan, Chris had been exposed to things Afghan. Chris himself researched his dissertation topic in Afghanistan, and taught in the American International School in Kabul, its capital. Then, in 1971, a desire to study Afghanistan led a group of North American scholars to form the Afghanistan Studies Association (ASA).

As a member of ASA, Professor Jung joined in the search for a campus that would provide a single institutional location to house essential materials and be a center for scholarly interaction. ASA contacted many universities with area studies programs and with collections already in place, and had met with lack of interest in studying the single emerging nation of Afghanistan. This attitude on the part of more prestigious

institutions spurred Chris to pursue his idea at UNO. His unflagging enthusiasm and commitment to the study of developing Afghanistan, combined with Chancellor Roskens' already favorable disposition to internationalizing education at UNO, resulted in the University's administration agreeing to establish an institutional base for the Afghanistan Studies Association at UNO in the Fall of 1972. This affiliation meant to the University the probability of receiving research grants not previously open to UNO.

Following his initial success, Chris Jung applied his energy and persuasiveness to the pursuit of information on grants and U. S. Agency for International Development (A.I.D.) programs, to acquire funding for exchange of professors and students between UNO and Kabul University, and to have a geology colleague (John F. Shroder) redirect his study emphasis from Africa to Afghanistan. Chris' labors triggered the involvement of other UNO departments and colleges as well, for example English, Engineering, Business, and Education.

Not the least of Chris' efforts was directed to obtaining materials appropriate for the study of Afghanistan. Colleagues in ASA provided what items they could, but their major accomplishment, along with Chris, and later Tom Gouttierre, was in persuading a noted Afghan studies scholar, Arthur Paul, to donate to UNO the largest known private collection of books and documents on Afghanistan. The Paul collection arrived from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the Fall of 1974. Unfortunately, by this time, the prime mover for the study of Afghanistan at UNO, Chris Jung, had succumbed to a blood disease. He died in October 1973. Arthur Paul, himself, died a few years later, in January 1976.

This core collection arrived at the UNO Library in the Fall of 1974. It consisted of more than 400 monographs in English, about 100 titles in European languages, and some 450 books, newspapers and periodicals in Pushto and/or Dari. (I say "and/or" because the official languages of

Afghanistan are Dari, the Afghan dialect of Persian or Farsi, and Pushto, an Indo-Iranian language, and most government agency publications, as well as newspapers and periodicals, appear in both languages, either in parallel text or with summaries in one or the other). I remember the arrival in our Cataloging Department of several battered boxes, with the musty, dusty smell of sea voyages and storage, and also I remember our fascination with the look of these non-roman alphabet languages and with the idea that they were read from right to left, rather than "our way".

The subject matter of Arthur Paul's books ranges from tourist guides for the cities of Kabul and Herat, to comprehensive histories; from early Afghan/Persian writers to contemporary Afghan literary figures; and from Islam religion to contemporary economic conditions. Publication dates range from the last half of the 19th century into the 1970's. The heaviest holdings are in history and literature, but religion and other subjects are also represented.

From Fall 1974 on, materials have arrived at the UNO Library through the UNO Center for Afghanistan Studies (C.A.S.), from ASA members, and from Kabul University, with which an exchange faculty and student program had been arranged, as a result of Professor Jung's initial efforts. Reports resulting from U.S. A.I.D. programs also arrived with some regularity, and UNO faculty members returning from their exchange tours also brought materials with them, which were donated to the Library.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT:

Currently there is no specific budget amount for purchase of books about Afghanistan, but English language imprints arrive through normal approval plan receipts and faculty direct orders. Should an especially desirable item become available, funds are usually forthcoming from the Library's general budget. Given the Soviet Union's occupation of

Afghanistan, it is not likely that many Kabul imprints will be added to the collection. In the past, printing in Afghanistan has pretty much been a government activity, and is likely to continue that way for the immediate future. From outside of Afghanistan, University Library's most recent acquisition has been Kabul Radio Pashto News Monitoring obtained from Maiwand's Trust of Afghan Human Freedoms in New Delhi. Kabul New Times continues to arrive on microfilm on a fairly regular basis, but previous avenues for receiving materials from Kabul have all but dried up. It remains for UNO Library's Collection Development Department to concentrate on acquiring those items which are available, from commercial publishers, antiquarian book dealers, various embassies, and other sources, which may supplement holdings.

PROCESSING:

To catalog those items printed in roman alphabets into UNO's collection did not pose a great problem to UNO's catalogers. There were the National Union Catalogs of the Library of Congress (L.C.) to search for entries, and usually a librarian or two on the staff with enough language expertise to accomplish the task of cataloging French, German, and even some Russian monographs (which use the Cyrillic alphabet).

But, what to do about the imprints in Afghanistan's official languages of Pushto and Dari? These did pose a problem. No library staff member had ever possessed expertise in these languages, and it did not seem likely that, given the need to employ librarians with broader-based expertise, that the Library would be able to hire an individual with such specialized knowledge.

Therefore, the cataloging of Pushto and Dari items was planned as a joint effort between members of Kabul University exchange faculty with sufficient fluency in English, and UNO Library catalogers. Tom Gouttierre,

Director of International Studies and Programs and the Center for Afghanistan Studies, made available to the Library, whenever possible, the services of Kabul University visiting professors. Similarly, UNO Library administrators released, whenever possible, catalogers and ancillary personnel to prepare materials for the collection. The Kabul faculty members transliterated to the roman alphabet a series of bibliographic details on Pushto and Dari works. Then, based on these details, such as author, title, edition, imprint, and subject matter, a cataloger attempted to locate a usable matching record in Library of Congress catalogs, or at least a form of the author's name used in these catalogs. With the information thus provided, the books were cataloged. It was apparent before long that transliteration varied among the exchange professors, and our cataloging reflects these variations. Some items were apparently cataloged from an added English title page, whereas the text is in Dari.

During the summer of 1979, automation came to University Library in the form of OCLC, an international bibliographic database that libraries use to acquire and catalog books and produce catalog cards. Fortuitously, during the same period, the services of Ghulam Ali "Marshall" Ayeen were available. An Afghan student, with knowledge of English and with typing ability, was employed by the Library. Procedures were written for each member of the team to standardize the information as much as possible, and a computer worksheet was devised that incorporated the same bibliographic details as for the manual method, with information needed to make the data machine readable for entry into OCLC's database. Each piece to be cataloged was assigned an item number; this number Marshall recorded on a worksheet for that piece. The item number idea is being carried through on catalog cards and acid-free call-number cards, so that anyone lacking Pushto or Dari knowledge may still retrieve the correct book from Special

Collections. On the worksheets Marshall used Library of Congress transliteration guidelines for Pushto and Dari, thereby making it easier to search the L.C. catalogs and select one form for an author's name. There were still problems, however. The cataloger (mainly myself in this phase), did not have Marshall's background on Afghanistan, including knowledge of its government agencies and the intricacies of Afghan names and honorifics, and Marshall, in turn, was not aware of the precise requirements of cataloging, so there was frequently need for dialog between the two to identify series, periodicals, sets, and the like, in order to make records as complete as possible.

Now, essentially all the Pushto and Dari works received have been added to the OCLC database and to the University Library's Special Collections. That they are in the database is probably still a well-kept secret because we have not received calls or letters from scholars advising us where we may have erred in this process. A few errors in data entry, however, have been discovered and corrected by OCLC. Without their corrections the data could not be retrieved through a machine search. About 60 to 75 titles cataloged earlier have yet to be retransliterated and added to the database. They are, however, available in Special Collections.

SCOPE, SIZE, AND ACCESS:

Geographically, the scope of the collection is mainly determined by the current boundaries of Afghanistan. Exceptions include nineteenth century imprints encompassing the history of Great Britain, German and Russian relations across the Central Asia region, and accounts of border disputes in this region. Other exceptions are one hundred fifteen reels of microfilm of His [British] Majesty's India Office Library, entitled Secret Letters and Enclosures from Persia, etc., 1817-1888, physically housed in the microforms area of the Library, but assuredly part of

UNO's Afghanistan collection.

Also, on ~~other~~ over 90 reels of microfilm from the India Office Library are Records of the British Legation in Kabul. There are substantial holdings of Anis and Jamhuriat, two of Kabul's largest daily newspapers. Virtually all but one issue of Siraj al Akhbar, an influential fortnightly of the early 1900's are in six bound volumes. This paper was edited by statesman Mahmud Tarzi. Periodicals are a good part of the Arthur Paul core collection, although they are in short runs or scattered holdings. They include literary journals Adab of the Kabul University's Faculty of Letters and Humanities, and Aryana, of Afghanistan Historical Society. There are two journals of the Ministry of Education, Pohena and Irfan. The popular monthly, Zwandun, the equivalent of Life magazine, is represented by at least twenty issues. The ASA Newsletter, the output of the Afghanistan Studies Association, is still being received as issued.

Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer, Ernest Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea, Schiller's Wilhelm Tell, and two titles by Rabindranath Tagore are held in Pushto translation, as well as several science books for children, by Bertha Morris Parker.

Dari works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi and Jāmī, great poets of the 13th and 15th centuries respectively, share space with those of Khalīlī, a living Dari poet-historian. Works of two important literary figures writing in Pushto, Khwushhāl Khān, 17th century, and ʿAbd al-Hayy Habībī, 20th century, enhance the literature holdings.

Among the economics holdings are an American Embassy economic trends report, the Afghanistan Ministry of Planning five-year and annual plans for Afghanistan, and statistical information for the early 1970's provided by Central Statistics Office.

For the first few years, all acquisitions, from whatever source,

were shelved in the open stacks, and an extra shelflist card was generated to identify Afghanistan holdings. About 400 titles in roman alphabets are still located in the stacks, mainly recent imprints or easily replaced titles from commercial publishers. Another 280 roman alphabet titles not easily replaced have recently been moved to the Special Collections area. Presently about 700 publications in Pushto and Dari are also in this Special Collections area. This last figure could be deemed "inflated" because some issues of a few periodicals were cataloged as "separates", there being so little information about the title as a whole.

Although "Special Collections" at UNO connotes several orientations--special authors, local history, early imprints, fine arts presses, and so forth--these are interfiled, while the Afghanistan materials themselves are shelved separately, to afford most direct access for interested users. The Special Collections materials, including Afghanistan items, are available to library users at two regularly scheduled times each week, and access at other times may be arranged through appointments with selected Library staff members. A pleasant reading and work room is provided for visiting scholars or registered students while they are using materials from Special Collections stacks. Special Collections materials are not circulated.

PRESENT STANDING OF THE COLLECTION:

This paper has not undertaken close examination of Afghanistan holdings of other libraries. It would, therefore, be premature to state that UNO's Afghanistan collection is the finest on the subject, or unique in the nation, although some scholars have given it that status. Brief correspondence was received from the three institutions identified in Ash's Subject Collections[1] as having materials on the subject of Afghanistan. A 1971 survey of its Middle East collection,[2] forwarded with Hoover

Institution's letter, indicates about 1000 volumes are in Persian, but do not all deal with Afghanistan specifically. Lack of a Middle East cataloger now prevents their actively acquiring items for that collection, although they have been receiving Kabul New Times, as well as some Moscow and New Delhi imprints about Afghanistan.[3] New York Public Library indicates strong holdings in western language materials on Afghanistan, but acknowledges their Pushto holdings are not strong. Both New York Public Library and Harvard College Library offer photocopy services toward a subject bibliography of their Afghanistan materials. Harvard's Afghanistan holdings,[5] they state, are considerable, but are spread through their various libraries and collections. They advised the best overview would come from Southern Asia, a publication in their Widener Library Shelflist series.[6]

UNO does not currently own the printed catalogs these institutions have issued, against which to measure its holdings. However, UNO's collection stands up favorably in the areas checked against such bibliographies as a short one issued by The Asia Society[7] and an extensive one by Donald N. Wilbur.[8] It has not been the Center for Afghanistan Studies policy to request extensive purchases in Russian and other European languages, but rather to be selective, placing the emphasis on obtaining publications in Pushto, Dari, and English. Strengths of the Paul collection were in history and literature, and these subjects are still the major focus in the current UNO Afghanistan collection.

One aspect of the collected materials on Afghanistan has been given short shrift here, but a few words should be included about uncataloged items. In the endeavor to process Pushto and Dari materials into Special Collections and enter them on OCLC, it was necessary to suspend handling of many of the mimeographed reports in English done by various agencies of U. S. and Afghanistan, as well as such research groups as R. R. Nathan

Associates, Inc. These deal with such topics as imports and exports, farming, natural resources, and health services. Cataloging these reports will likely appear on our next list of goals.

Once that is accomplished, another paper could usefully undertake a quantitative/qualitative analysis of the collection, measured against holdings in other libraries. In that way, purchasing could be planned so as not to duplicate their holdings and yet enhance our own.

CONCLUSION:

Although this paper has been but a brief, rather cursory survey of UNO's Afghanistan collection, I believe it does point up that this University has in place a most valuable resource to complement its International Studies and Programs department and to further the research and study of one of the most interesting of Third World nations--Afghanistan. In the near future, Phase One of a bibliography of UNO Afghanistan holdings will be available, because the Center for Afghanistan Studies and University Library are again using a team approach to further increase the usefulness of this UNO resource for research and teaching on the Third World.

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